



A QUARTERLY LITERARY EXHIBIT

Fall-Winter 1922

MIMI (<i>Story</i>)	ISAAC KLOOMOK
BY THE FIREPLACE	} (<i>Poems</i>)
SEARCHLIGHTS	
ALTER BRODY	
THE GIBBET (<i>Poem</i>)	
PENNIA (<i>Story</i>)	
HENRY GOODMAN	

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CLAY is a departure in this country but not uncommon in Europe: a literary exhibit uncensored, unharmonized, unsanctified by editorial guidance, a magazine that is merely the periodic organ and outlet of the group of writers who issue it. Instead of giving the public what someone thinks it wants, as our popular magazines do, or what someone thinks the public ought to want, as is the way of our more exclusive journals, the contributing authors of CLAY aim at just publishing their work periodically, submitting themselves to the public without any intermediary.

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"In his poems there is revealed a sincerity and sensitivity so keen that they seem to possess not only the soul but the blood and bones of poetry.—It is a personal magic that pervades these young and passionate pages."

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HENRY GOODMAN:

Contributor of short stories to various magazines, including The Bookman, Pictorial Review, Midland, Pearsons.

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Author of "Log", a book of short stories; has contributed in the past to the leading Yiddish journals. In CLAY he has made his debut as a factor in American fiction.

"He has an unusual gift for the painting of impressions, effects, moods, colors, scenes and all the subtle environs of love and passion..... In such pictures he employs a palette not in the command of any other Yiddish writer....."

ABRAHAM CAHAN.

D. LIEBOVITZ:

His play "John Hawthorne" was produced in New York. As nothing good has been written about this work by the acknowledged critics and so much bad, he wanted to print the bad criticism, but alas! there is not sufficient room for all of it.

JAMES RENNEL:

Has returned from many years abroad, in France and Germany, where he wrote his books "American Morons in Literature and Politics", "Baseball and Literature", "Facts, Fancies and Radiograms." The French critic Jules Baban, the head of the Panthe Insurrectionists, said of Renne! : "His work has the clarity, distinction and simplicity of the French mind at its best." The more conservative critic Francis Tuilebally said of Renne!'s "Facts, Fancies and Radiograms": "Excellent, concise, sometimes brilliant in analysis without preconceptions, without prejudice, without theories; he is a solvent."

NOUVELLE PHILOSOPHIE, June, 1919.

CLAY ::

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Mimi

By ISAAC KROOKER.

I was gardener at a big hotel to which she and her mother came for the summer.

The very first day I saw her I knew she was for me.

You see about you beautiful women and you love each for her individual gift of sweetness.

Mimi was one of those women with whom you fall in love at first sight. You love her a week or two, and then, if she becomes submissive to you, you go seeking someone else. But to the end of your life she will haunt you like an unfulfilled dream. And often in lonely places you will stop suddenly and look about; it will seem to you that you just caught the fading scent of her perfume—as if she had been passing by with her soft steps—and you will regret that you had not come a little sooner. . . .

She could not have been more than nineteen, small, pretty, with big, black solemn eyes in the small, wax-white face; a small, gentle red mouth, with small, white, sharp teeth, a slightly long nose, high, smooth, white forehead, with soft, dark brown hair. She was delicate, refined, and light and airy in her silken dresses.

The morning after her husband returned to the city, leaving her with her mother, I brought her my first gift of flowers.

"Permit me, gracious lady," I begged her, "to bring you fresh flowers every morning. Your husband has ordered it."

She seized the bunch of flowers and pressed it to her bosom and

then touched a flower with her lips. She did not notice me. It did not occur to her, naturally, that her husband had not sent the flowers.

I knew that husbands later reward such small favors.

But I brought my flowers only to those women whom I loved. By my sweetheart's perfume, by her clothes, by her eyes and hair I knew the flowers she would like and these I brought to her.

By means of my flowers I came in touch with her.

How lovely pearls are about a woman's beautiful neck. I love those great white pearls that roll the delicate, soft roundness of their smooth, transparent, pure bodies down the gentle throat of a woman to her half round, small breasts, like small, cold kisses of pale lips.

But I never had pearls to give them. I gave my sweethearts small flowers.

You see about you beautiful women and you love each for her own gift of sweetness. But not everyone draws close to your soul.

Mimi became at once precious to me. I loved her for many, many weeks and nobody knew of my love and nobody was jealous of me. She never even suspected it.

Perhaps she did not know of my love and took it as she did the odors of the fields, the blue of sky, the gold of the sun. It was just as silent, and was always at her feet. . . .

Who was I to look at her? Her servant to whom she threw a silver coin for his service. I never failed to take the silver coin!

Mimi was lonesome among the joyous guests of the hotel. Her husband would come for the week-ends and then disappear. He would come with a company of lively men and women. He rarely stayed with her. Her mother, a handsome woman, young for her age, did not care to have Mimi near her.

Mimi wandered about the corridors, on the balconies, across the terraces as if lost.

The young people sought her company and hovered about her like bees, but she did not encourage them. Women of her age she avoided. She looked with distrust upon everyone. I wondered at this. But because of this very thing I often met Mimi in lonely places. She would walk for hours about the lake and through the leafy aisles of the deep forest. I was near her more often than she knew, and watched over her like her shadow.

At first she was not pleased to come upon me suddenly. But after a while I succeeded in getting her interested in the various curiosities of the forest, all of which I knew well. From time to time I would bring her a rare plant, a curious bird-nest, a brilliantly colored butterfly.

Once I proposed to take her about the lake in my boat and teach her to fish—for pay, naturally. In a short time fishing became a passion with her. She would come often into my boat and I would row over the quiet water to some restful shaded nook, bait her hook and wait in silence for the joyous cry with which she would announce the struggling fish on her line, and I took as much joy in her as she in her catch.

In this manner I spent many evenings close to her, at her feet, near her fragrant dresses.

She did not come to me Saturdays and Sundays, but I had to see her and I would go about hungering for her smile until I managed to get a look at her.

One morning when I brought her my flowers, her room was vacant. Her mother, too, was gone. It was the end of summer.

Our hotel was open all year. During the winter, having nothing

to do in the gardens, I was employed in the dining-room, serving our wealthy guests.

In the fall, however, the hotel was almost completely deserted.

There were no young, lovely women and I was lonesome.

I longed for Mimi.

Then one day I suddenly saw her on the steps of the hotel. She was alone.

It was such an unexpected joy that I cried out—in my great happiness I forgot myself:

"Ah, what happiness, madame! . . . So unexpected— . . ."

She look at me, puzzled, and turned away, offended.

Had she failed to recognize me or . . . ?

But my thoughts were immediately occupied with something else. In the moment that my eyes had rested upon her, I perceived in her face something that disturbed me greatly. A yellow pallor was spread upon her face and under it was a deeper, darker color as if under her delicate skin there were the flow of a black, restless current. An embitterment, which was unbelievably strange in her child-like face, had bitten into the corners of her small, red mouth. But what scared me was the frightened, almost bewildered look which leaped about in her black eyes.

What could have happened? What had occurred? Why was she here alone?

I could not endure it. In the hotel register I found no one entered with her—neither her mother, her husband nor even her maid. She had brought nothing with her, much as if she had left her home for a walk and had come here unexpectedly. It was strange!

She locked herself in her room and was not to be seen anywhere all afternoon.

It was at nightfall. The sun had already set behind the hills; but the air was still filled with that delicate melancholy after-glow, with that gentle, luminous twilight which touches all things with sadness and yearning—like that which settles in the heart about the image of a loved one who is gone.

I was about to turn my boat back to shore with the fish I had caught for our cook. It was quiet, the only sound being the dipping of my oars and the leap of a fish that was frightened by my advance.

Suddenly I heard a distant splash in the water, as if a heavy body had been detached from the shore and had slipped into the lake. Soon a black undulating mass appeared on the steel-gray surface of the lake, which stirred restlessly for a while and then became still. If I had not known it was too late in the season I would have thought that some of the guests had gone in bathing. Perhaps it was some belated ducks that had come to the lake? It was too far off to make certain. But my ear caught a muffled cry, cut short, and then again the same cry. It dawned on me that some one was drowning.

It took a long while, much too long, until with great effort I reached the place. All the while I could hardly keep out the terrible thought that it was Mimi who was in the lake. When I came to the place where the black mass had been moving before, there was nothing on the surface. If anyone had drowned, he was now sunk to the bottom.

Near shore the lake was not deep—that was my one consolation—and without stopping to think, I leaped into the lake and dived to the bottom. Once, twice, three times I was forced to come up for air. My heart ached with bewilderment. I could not find anything.

It was dark and I was not certain of the place. It is hard to judge distance on water. Perhaps I was not even near the right place? It would be vain to shout for help. The hotel was too far off for me to be heard, and if anyone did come it would be too late.

I lowered myself once more and renewed my search. I searched and time was flying with merciless speed. O—it will be too late, too late.

Suddenly my fingers felt a mass of soft wet moss. I caught hold and tugged. I felt a body follow after.

And before I had time to breathe and to open my eyes, I knew that Mimi was lying before me—drowned.

Was all my effort in vain? I dared not doubt nor think long. Mimi's precious life was in my hands and I began to do whatever I could.

When finally I heard her first, painful sigh, I felt exhausted at her wet feet and kissed them in my happiness.

"Well, Mimi, little one? What shall I do with you now?"

She had not yet come to. I must hasten to bring her to warm shelter and dry clothing.

But where shall I take her? I did not want to take her to the hotel. The story would spread rapidly. And who knew what had driven Mimi to this desperate act?

And how could I entrust her to strangers? I should not even be admitted to her. No, I could not think of it. Mimi was mine, now. I was responsible for her life and I wished to remain alone with her when she should awake and find herself back in the world from which she had sought so desperately to escape.

In the forest stood a little house where I kept various implements and all sorts of seeds. It was not far from the lake. Until she

would be able to decide where she wished to go, I would keep her here, I decided.

I took her in my arms like a sleeping child, like a wet water-lily, and brought her to my summer hut.

I had no bed and laid a few warm blankets that I found close to the open fireplace, where I soon built a cheerful fire.

It was dark outside. The autumn night descended quickly—a dark night with a few, scattered, cold stars in the sky. The woods, gloomy in the gold and silver that he shed, beat at the windows with his lean, dry branches.

I hung Mimi's wet clothing before the fire, and lighting my pipe sat down at Mimi's feet to dream. There was no lamp. The burning logs illumined Mimi's pale features and her dusky golden hair. The shadows, the smoke of my pipe and the dancing, quivering sparkles of fire merged into one another and watched over me and my treasure on the floor.

Gradually Mimi grew warm and came to. She groaned in her sleep like a child that had gone to bed, sick. Deep, unhappy sighs broke from her breast. Soon she began tossing restlessly and to awaken. At first she put her small hands upon her heart, then she drew up her feet, and then she moved her head from side to side, lay still a while and then stirred again.

I sat in silence, smoking my pipe and watching her.

Suddenly she sat up, opened big, deep, black eyes and looked in fear at the fire and at me.

Then she suddenly realized that she was naked and threw herself upon the blankets to cover herself.

It happens sometimes that you go about for days and weeks, poor, dejected, miserable. You are homeless. You are superfluous.

You are walking the streets and look up at the sky. It is of a lovely deep blue, the small summer clouds are pearl-white and move lightly and airily, and the dear sun is in the zenith of the sky in all its golden beauty, young and joyous—and you suddenly feel that all is well. Broad radiant paths open before your eyes, and with song on your lips you walk them, in your quiet joy. You are rich forever.

Lie there, little white Mimi, in my warm blankets. Golden days are before me from now on. I will never be poor any more. My nights will be fragrant with hyacinth. My sadness will be a lambent gem.

Thus I mused as I sat.

Mimi began to cry.

"Good, fine!" I thought to myself. She is reviving. It might have been much worse. Let her have a good cry.

When she was tired of weeping I brought her hot tea with dried rose petals.

"Drink, little Princess," I pleaded, and got down on my knees with care.

She made no move toward the steaming tea. She was offended with me.

"Where are my clothes?" she demanded softly, after a while.

"They are drying. They will soon be dry. Meanwhile drink the tea and warm up," I urged her.

She did not turn to the tea.

I placed the cup on the floor in my anger, and began to scold her.

"The Princess is unjust and unkind."

She had not expected such words from me. She looked at me amazed and frightened.

"How could I have left you in the lake?" I said in protest. She began to cry quietly.

"Listen to me, Mimi," I turned suddenly upon her with the full sincerity of my love. "I shall tell you everything so you may understand. Only listen to me and do not become angry."

"For days, weeks, months I have served and guarded you loyally. I loved you as one loves the star that lights his lost way, as one loves the sunlight that touches his bed in the morning. I have loved and worshipped you and have blessed the earth you walked on. Days, weeks and months I have loved you and have hardly dared raise my eyes to you because you have not belonged to me. But those to whom you belong have wronged you. They have driven you to the lake and to them you are now dead. Nobody knows that I have brought you here and I shall not surrender you to anyone. Now you are mine. I have found you as one finds a dead bird in the forest— I have taken you from the worms, from the fish. I have reclaimed you from the lake and now you are mine, my treasure— my rare pearl. Don't you understand my happiness and joy? You cast yourself away like some useless, worthless thing. I gathered you up, brought you to my hut, and my home has filled with song and fragrance."

In this way, drunk with her and with my own pulsing blood, I spoke to her of my love. She lay and listened.

The logs burned. The smoke rolled out along the ceiling and spread in clouds about the room, filling the air with the warm odor of resin and of the dried twigs and berries and of the roots of aromatic herbs which I threw into the fire.

Mimi was lying near the fire, and gradually her pale cheeks began to blush, her eyes began to sparkle in the half dusk of the

room. At last her lips showed a shy smile and she stretched out her radiant, naked arms and asked for tea.

I brought her steaming fresh tea with dried rose petals, and she drank.

While she drank she let me kiss her little, warm feet, which she stretched out to me from under cover.

The woods and the night stood silent at my window.

For a week Mini was with me in the summer-hut, glowing and full of song. She took on color, was filled with fragrance, and intoxicated me with love.

It rained every day. The woods were full of noises. The paths were covered with wet, yellow leaves and the roads held little lakes of rainwater. No one came to look for Mini.

At the end of the week, on my return to Mini, I found her gone. She had left me a note.

"Thank you, dear, for the gift you made me—my life. And more thanks for your beautiful love. I ran away from my husband like a foolish, frightened child. I am returning to him now. I go back to him with a great treasure that I found near you in the woods. He comes first. But if he does not know how to value it, then——!"

I waited and waited for Mini. I was certain she would return to me and to my love. But she did not come. I hoped to see her the next summer, but again I was disappointed.

Years passed. Once I came upon Mini at a hotel at the sea-shore. I recognized her instantly. She had not changed much—the same sweet little girl, although she had borne two lovely children. She was with her husband and without her mother.

To judge from the way she walked, resting on her husband's arm, confidently, she must have been happy with him.

I raised my hat in greeting, but they did not recognize me. They did not know me.

But that very evening Mini sought me out in a quiet corner. She graciously gave me her hand to kiss—I hardly dared do it.

"Ah, my friend," she sighed soft and happily. "I am so happy with my husband! We have two pretty children. We are happy—truly happy!"

Yes, she was happy. I could see that. Her happiness breathed in her eyes, upon her lips, in the delicate color of her skin and in the vivacity of her fresh, odoriferous being.

Two days later—her husband had gone back to the city—I saw a handsome young man steal out of Mini's room. It was early in the morning.

Later I recognized the same stylish young man at her side, promenading the long beach beside the ocean.

By the Fireplace

By ALGER BROADY.

This fireplace then
Means for you the hearth of human hope,
Around which we have sat throughout the centuries
And warmed ourselves.
The ardor of human thought infusing the cold earth with meaning.
I wonder,
As we argue in this cosy back parlor—
You, in that stern-backed armchair framed
Like a young priest against a Gothic portal;
I, on this soft sofa, leaning forward
Stealing a swift look at you from time to time
From a calm corner of my brain;
I wonder what you'd think of it—
If you could read my mind.
You are the poet, the singing seer,
The high priest of humanity mired with shining visions
Illumining the world-chaos with visted hopes,
From the oracle of your deep soul;
The archangel of Revolt,
Summoning the downtrodden to arise
With poems that are like melodious trumpet blasts;
I am the painter drudging with moist paints and sharp etching
needles,
Cutting little square panels out of life,

As I ramble through the world
Concerned only with ordinary unrelated details.
(Details for all, but eternal Units to me!);
Losing myself in the depths of little things
As an astronomer loses himself in the starry heights
Where this agitated earth is but a spark
Flung from a whirling flame.
Empires may rise and fall;
Systems of society may sprout and decay.
Capitalism follow feudalism, socialism follow capitalism.
A little more luxury for some, a little less misery for others:—
The Units are the same
The stars and grass-blades,
Always the same.
A thin-faced young girl patiently singeing her stubborn straight hair
with curling irons in an East Side kitchen.
Is more fundamental to me than Plato or Karl Marx;
A lonely iron fenced tree rouged by the sunset at the end of a
narrow street
Excites me more than the reddest revolution;
A dull-eyed young Christ expostulating Truth and Justice to me in
the barred visiting ward of an asylum
Is more terrible to me than an army in riot.
And you, for instance—
You who are a waving torch of rebellion to the world—
The wielder of words that are like cleaving swords,
The maker of phrases that are like charged torpedoes—
What would you say
If at this moment
When we are debating the destiny of the human race,
I am studying the chaste sweetness of your grave, soft face
With the tender curiosity of a lover;

Watching the shifting delicate lines playing between your girlish
mouth and chin,

The unfathomable gentleness of your sensitively-set eyes,
Warmly brown and tremulous with fluency
Strained to a stern absorption;

And the look in them when you are angry
As of a doe turning at bay!

And it's all that I can do to resist a crazy impulse

To hug you to my heart in the old-fashioned masculine way

And force a warm kiss on your lips—

Sweet as a young girl's despite your virile symphonies,

Despite your forty years

Excuse me

I was just thinking of something.

To me it is just a lot of pretty fire

Incidentally warm and most intensely bright.

An unpatterned dance of greenish flames on the flushed, melting
coals,

Moving to the harmony of some deep desire,

Clothed to me in the mystery of some thought

I can't get hold of.

Why do the coarse coals spend themselves in dancing flames—

Why does your fragile spirit forge itself into swords!

Searchlights

By ALGER BRON.

Tingling shafts of light,

Like gigantic staffs

Brandished by blind, invisible hands,

Cross and recross each other in the sky,

Frantically—

Groping among the stars—stabbing themselves against the grey,
bloated clouds—;

Tapping desperately for a firm foothold

in the fluctuating mists.

Calm-eyed and inaccessible

The stars peer through the blue fissures of the sky,

Unperturbed among the panic of scurrying beams,

Twinkling with a cold, acrid merriment.

THE GIBBET

By HENRY GOODMAN.

If I listen, quietly,
I hear,
Through the counted steps of the guard
On the grey, stone flags,
The wild gushing
And brawling
Of the brown gutter brook
By the prison wall.
If I listen, quietly,
I can hear . . .
Is it the falling of rain . . . ?
Tap, tip, tap, tap. . . .

Tomorrow they will take me out.
They will ask
Have I any last words to say?
And I will tell them
How good it was
That the moon could glow
Through my window
Like a kind, ruddy face
That did not like to show how sorry it was for me.

The rain has stopped;
The gutter-brook is silent.
Just look to those hills,
(All the night they were green in the driving slant)

Growing grey and somber in the dawn,
Bearing tall trees that will grow
And saplings that will be tall—
Young saplings—strong gallows.

Hear!
There's a step, and another one,
Then a shuffling of feet in the passage.

Do not hold me,
I will walk alone,
I will look about me.
Tell me, tell me,
What makes the grey walls run?
Who has cut the trees into the lower skies?
Who has brought the hills to rest,
The hills, alive with spring?

If a young girl disrobes,
Letting down her loose, gay hair
To brush her naked shoulders
And gleaming breasts,
My heart is ready to split.

And now,
Spring comes dancing down the slopes
With gleaming limbs,
And all the loves of my youth
Are glowing in this girl;
The tenderness of the eyes of one,
The softness of another's voice,
The grace and the call of still another—
And all are luring, luring. . . .
Oh, I will die before they hang me.

Don't tie my eyes—
You cannot ever dim their sight,
Of growing trees,
And whirling hills

And brooks
And naked, shining girls . . .
Or of the yellow rope, like growing wheat,
Or the black arms of the gallows, saplings once . . .
Now drowning in the whiteness of death!

There is a crack.
The body jerks,
The rope creaks.
The two limbs, like separate, black snakes,
Wriggle, writhe, stop . . .
How the rope creaks!
How the rope creaks!

The wind is in the trees,
And the sun is on the hills,
If you listen, quietly,
You can hear . . .
Is it the dripping of blood?
Tap, tip, tap, tap. . .

Fennia

By HENRY GOODMAN.

Compared to her flat breasted or still breastless friends, Fennia was like a flower prematurely in bloom, while its companions had yet to await the awakening from the bud-state.

To her physical ripeness, a maturity that made her seem years older than she was, Fennia, aged fourteen, brought a love for children that was almost abnormal. Not only had she helped wean the two blond toddlers that played on the earthen floor of her home, but all the village girls took her child-love into account when they wanted to go larking in the fields, and they used to leave their charges with Fennia. Many a scolding had her mother given her on finding Fennia busily mothering some neighbor's child.

And now Fennia's mother was once more with child. Daily she was expecting the arrival of the new baby, and daily she was more concerned with fear that the household would be upset when she took to bed; (she was shamefully aware that she was weak, and that her neighbors went through childbirth without taking to bed). She feared that the little ones would be neglected; that her husband would not find his meals when he came from the fields.

Fennia did not know about her mother until her friend Malia told her. She was with her two little brothers. The younger she held in her arms against her bosom. She was rocking him, gently emitting at the same time sing-song sounds with which she was

telling him to sleep. Her other little brother, his finger stuck in his mouth, held with his other hand a fold of her long single garment, and swayed in rhythm to Fennia's motion.

Malja, whose yellow braids were so tightly woven that they glistened like golden chains in the sun, approached, leading her youngest sister. "Fennia," she said, "I cannot make her sleep—my mother will scold me if I don't. You make her sleep, yes?"

Fennia answered, "Wait! I'll put Valodja away." She swayed more gently, bent her head over the still form of her small brother, raised her arms so she could look into the little dirty face—he was asleep. She moved to a box near the doorway and laid the baby on the soft pillows.

She returned to Malja, whose little sister went readily to her arms. Fennia began to sway and hum. Malja whispered, smilingly, "Fennia, you know, your mama's going to have a baby."

Fennia stopped swaying. She looked at Malja with amazement in her eyes and rapid beating of her heart. "Another baby?" she said joyously, and then turned to question her friend. "How do you know? Who told you that?"

"Oh, I heard. My mother was telling Toma. They were laughing. But I hate babies," she continued. "You got to be with them all the time. Always put them to sleep and carry them around. You can't go anywhere because of them. You—I don't see how you stand them. Everybody says the same. You take care of all the babies."

But Fennia heard no more. The sounds in her ears were not of Malja's voice. It seemed a softer music, and she saw "her new baby," her new little charge, so tiny that you feared to touch it because your hand was not so soft as the hairless soft head. She hoped it would be a little girl. Two brothers were enough. If she had a baby sister, she would dress her in tiny soft gowns she would

learn to make. She would find beautiful little ribbons for her neck and wrinkled wrists.

When she came home, it was to assert a new attitude toward her mother. From the corners of her eyes she watched her move slowly about the one room of the house. Her mother carried the new baby! Lovingly she followed every move her mother made. It seemed to her that the slow deliberation in which her mamotchka accomplished her household tasks was because she knew—knew that a baby was coming.

One day, when walking about had become a task, Fennia's mother called to her and said: "Fennitchka, listen. You are no more a little child. You can already understand. You know I am with child; you don't believe in the stork, or about buying babies. There are men and women, and the baby is mine and papa's. When baby comes and I cannot go about, you will have to care for father and the house and for me." The mother was ashamed that she had to take to bed and that she was so helpless. "When I was your age, Fennia," she continued, "I was little and thin, not like you, a big motherly girl. Now I am weak and I get sick, not like that big strong Tomia who has her babies even while she works."

Fennia was not demonstrative to her mother. But she could not repress herself entirely. "Oh, mamotchka, I am so happy and I love the little baby. I shall care for them all, for father and you, and for the new sweet baby."

From that moment she assumed her duties of caring for the household. With constant watchfulness she followed her mother from the moment dawn broke up her own slumbers to the hour when silent breathing marked her mother's rest. An intuitive tenderness informed her look, and her mind, which at all times was centered on babies, was filled with sweet imaginings about this new one, this

new little baby which she was to fondle and care for. A tide of sweet joy filled her heart.

From whatever place in the house she was, her eyes, large and childish, were directed on her mother's form. Her mind could not associate definitely its roundness with the coming of the baby, but vaguely, dimly, she thought her longings into what she saw. She cared for the little ones with an abstraction on the other to come. She kneaded the dough for the day's bread; she filled the water pails from the well near the roadside; she piled up the wood. But above all she glanced at her mother, lovingly. Her love for the tiny one was great enough to embrace her mother also.

A few days later Fennia was kneading dough near the open doorway. The hut with its low roof of dry thatch, strands of which were hanging down in various places, was lit up and heated by the fire on the blackened hearth. Her mother, motionless, was seated near by as if to supervise Fennia at her work, and occasionally she looked downward, beyond the step that led down from the threshold, down the worn grass path that led to the road. The only time she made as if to move was when the younger of the children was about to crawl out to the threshold. Then she screamed "Valodja!" Fennia hastened to the child and dragged him away. Then she went back to her work.

Into the pans, the insides of which glistened with the oil-wash she had given them, she placed the twists she had learned how to make from watching the Jewish cooks on Friday. With deft touches she set the white pasty mass into the pans and she turned to the brick stove. The fire was going out. She walked to the stack of thin logs and took a few. She was about to return to the fire when suddenly she saw Ivan with a burning brand in his little fist. She ran to him and, stooping, swung her hand down and snatched the burning wood. The swoop of her hand was so rapid that it carried upward, the brand flaring in its flight and instantly igniting the

thatch above the fireplace. Instantly the flames spread and enveloped the roof.

A hoarse scream escaped Fennia's lips. "Fire, mama!" she screamed. She caught Ivan in her arms and made for the door. She saw her mother in the doorway, struggling to get out, with Valodja in her arms. Her weight and momentum threw her forward and into her mother. Together they flung through the doorway and down the single step below the threshold. Fennia was up on the instant, Ivan crying in his fright at her hurried exit. Fennia screamed wildly to the men in fields. Her mother could not rise, but lay groaning like a wounded beast. Fennia sought to help her up.

From the fields, from the village and the road, even from the gypsy encampment in the woods, men and women ran to the burning hut. Fennia's father came. With the other men he entered the hut to save things. He did so only when some of the women directed him to leave them alone with his wife.

Fennia wondered that the women seemed to have forgotten the fire. Busied as she was with Ivan and Valodja, she saw that the women who were with her mother were pale and shook their heads as they whispered with one another.

The fire was gaining. The men stopped pouring water on the hut, for they could no longer approach it. On the path was piled all that had been saved: some bedding, a baby's cradle, a bedstead and a few other pieces of furniture. There was nothing to do but watch the hut burn to the ground. Fennia could not console her father, who was crying.

He was called by one of the women. Fennia, watching him, saw him grow pale and reach his hand to his hair. Then he walked quickly to her mother. Fennia saw that she was in tears. She left the children and walked to her mother's side. "Don't cry,

mamotchka," she said. "We will have another house. Papa will build one." But her mother wept and would not be consoled even by what her father said in an undertone.

Fennia was led away by Tonia, who said: "Go, watch the children. Your mama will be taken to my house and you'll stay there, too, till they build your house."

Tonia, together with the other women, assisted Fennia's mother into the bedstead. Then the men carried her slowly to Tonia's house across the road.

Fennia did not understand why her mother was crying. Had she not assured her that the house would be rebuilt? Besides, should she not be happy with the baby coming? Then Fennia thought she saw why her mother was unhappy. Perhaps it was unlucky for a baby to be born anywhere but in its own home. But she sought to combat ill-omened thoughts by dwelling on the baby's smallness, its helplessness and feebleness.

"Oh," she thought, "I shall be so happy when it comes. Then I'll care for it, and make it grow strong and take it to the fields. Its little hands will catch the grass, and tear it up."

The day after the fire she was in the fields with the children and other girls. She had not wanted to leave Tonia's house because she wanted to be near her mother. But Tonia and others—her father among them—had persuaded her to go. Her little girl friends prattled to her, but she would hardly heed a word. Malia was there, and Senya, and a few others, all of her age. But she looked older than the others. Little Valodja's head sank into her soft breasts as he slept, while beside her was seated Ivan.

Malia looked at Fennia and said: "Do you know, Fennia, my brother said you could be a mother, already. He said soon you will get a man and he will give you your own children."

"But I don't need any. My mama is going to have another one; a little girl, I hope."

Senya interrupted them by her shout. "Fennia, look! Your father is running to Tonia's house."

Fennia was up at once. She just stood Valodja up and, leaving him to Malia, ran off to Tonia's house.

It seemed to her that everyone there was weeping. Only her mother, white, in the darkness of the hut, as the pillows and sheets about her, was silent. For a moment Fennia stopped, thinking her dead. Then, as she was about to run to the bedside, her father and Tonia took her by the arms and led her away. Tonia said: "Fennitchka, you must be a strong girl. You must be good. The little baby is dead. She was born dead. You must not cry, for your mama is ill."

The baby dead! And it was a little girl! Fennia wondered how could that be? She was dead, her little sister, and she would never fondle her, never lead her out to the fields where the new grasses grew! Everything within her that had centered on this new little baby was outraged and wounded. The rawness of the hurt made her cry. "The baby dead! My baby is dead! Why doesn't mamotchka cry?" Her shoulders shook with the explosion of her sobs. The denial of all her longings was past her understanding.

When Fennia's mother came out of the stupor in which she lay, Fennia's own grief was trebled. Her mother's moaning and weak lamentations went to her heart. After a while she could not bear the crying.

She lost herself in thought of her little dead sister. In the vagueness of her thoughts Malia's words came to her. Malia's brother had said she would get a man soon—she would get her own children. A thought took possession of her and led her out of Tonia's house.

She looked about. The fields were deserted. None of the men were there. But from the encampment in the woods there came the sound of hammering. The gypsies were leaving that day. She started across the fields, ignoring the cries of Malia and Senya, who were tired of caring for Ivan and Valodja.

Soon she entered the fringe of the woods. Through the trellises of leaves she saw a tall, dark man cutting a tree. He had caught sight of her and had stopped his work. He was amazed but pleased by her question, and led her deeper into the wood.

Fennia's absence had been noted by Tonia and even by her own mother. Malia and Senya had brought Ivan and Valodja, who were crying in their hunger. Fennia's father had gone out to look for her.

Fennia met Tonia on the doorstep. She did not speak to her, but, hearing her mother moan, stopped a moment and looked about. The other women were there, wiping her mother's pale brow, and pressing the torn coverlet about her feverish body. Fennia could no longer bear the weeping and hurriedly she stepped to her mother's side.

"Mamotchka! mamotchka! You must not cry any longer. I am going to have a baby soon, for us two. I went to a gypsy man and I will have one."